

Message Text

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ORIGIN INR-10

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FM SECSTATE WASHDC

TO USDEL JEC PARIS

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AMEMBASSY PHNOM PENH

AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

AMCONSUL HONG KONG

AMEMBASSY VIENTIANE

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NO FOREIGN DISSEM/ CONTROLLED DISSEM

E. O. 11652: XGDS 5 B (2), DECLAS: IMPOSSIBLE TO DETERMINE

DATE

TAGS: CB (PINT)

SUBJECT; PHNOM PENH: READY TO NEGOTIATE?

FOLLOWING IS TEXT OF INR ANALYSIS

1. THERE ARE SOME TENTATIVE SIGNS THAT THE NEWLY REORGANIZED GOVERNMENT IN PHNOM PENH MAY BE PREPARING TO MAKE CONTACT WITH SIHANOUK' S GOVERNMENT- IN- EXILE. ALTHOUGH CAMBODIA LEADERS HAVE WANTED TO DELAY NEGOTIATIONS UNTIL THE GOVERNMENT COULD OVERCOME ITS ORGANIZATIONAL, MILITARY, AND PSYCHOLOGICAL DISARRAY, WITH THE EXCEPTION OF LON NOL, THEY APPEAR TO HAVE LITTLE HOPE THAT PROLONGING THE MILITARY STRUGGLE WILL ENHANCE THE GOVERNMENT' S POSITION.

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2. GKR TOTTERS ON. BARRING ANY SIGNIFICANT CHANGE IN THE FOREIGN SUPPORT EACH SIDE RECEIVES, THE PRESENT SITUATION -- MILITARY SEMI- STALEMATE AND GOVERNMENT INSTABILITY AND INEFFECTIVENESS -- COULD CONTINUE FOR SOME TIME TO COME. THE PROSPECTS FOR A SIGNIFICANT IMPROVEMENT IN THE FANK OR A MAJOR MILITARY CAMPAIGN TO RETAKE LOST TERRITORY ARE ALMOST NON- EXISTENT. NOR DO THE PROSPECTS FOR POLITICAL CONSOLIDATION SEEM MUCH BETTER.

3. THE PERFORMANCE OF THE NEWLY- FORMED POLITICAL COUNCIL HAS FOLLOWED FAMILIAR POLITICAL PATTERNS OF BICKERING AND PERSONAL POLITICAL MANEUVERING. SQUABBLES OVER THE SELECTION OF A PRIME MINISTER ENDED WITH THE DECISION TO ACCEPT IN TAM AS PRIME MINISTER AND TO FORM A CABINET. HOWEVER, THE VENEER OF CONSENSUS IS OBVIOUSLY QUITE THIN. UNDERNEATH IT MAY BE DEVELOPING A REAL POWER STRUGGLE BETWEEN IN TAM AND SIRIK MATAK, WHO HAS SHOWN SIGNS OF SEEKING A ROLE IN WHICH HE CAN DOMINATE THE OTHER COUNCIL MEMBERS. MEANWHILE, EFFORTS TO REDUCE LON NOL' S POSITION ALSO CONTINUE.

4. NEGOTIATIONS -- THE OFFICIAL STANCE. IN OFFICIAL COMMENTS THE GOVERNMENT REMAINS ADAMANT IN REJECTING THE IDEA OF BARGAINING WITH PRINCE SIHANOUK. THE NEW COUNCIL IS PLANNING TO ATTEMPT CONTACTS WITH REGIONAL INSURGENT LEADERS, AS THE GOVERNMENT HAS IN THE PAST, BUT HAS AGAIN PUBLICLY RULED OUT ATTEMPTS TO NEGOTIATE WITH THE DEPOSED PRINCE. FOREIGN MINISTER LONG BORET' S STATEMENT OF JANUARY 24 -- " WE EXCLUDE ALL POSSIBILITY OF NEGOTIATING WITH SIHANOUK, WHO REPRESENTS THE MONARCHY AND IS OPPOSED TO THE REPUBLICAN REGIME . . . WE WILL NOT ACCEPT ANY COMPROMISE ON THE FATE OF THE REPUBLICAN REGIME ITSELF" -- REMAINS THE OFFICIAL POSITION.

5. THE PERSONAL ANTAGONISM OF PHNOM PENH' S PRESENT LEADERS TOWARD THE FORMER RULER IS A SIGNIFICANT FACTOR IN THIS LINGERING INTRANSIGENCE. SIHANOUK' S UNPREDICTABILITY, COUPLED WITH THE POSSIBILITY OF REPRI- SALS FOR THEIR PARTICIPATION IN THE GKR, MAKES THE
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PROSPECT OF HIS RETURN QUITE UNATTRACTIVE TO THE GKR LEADERS.

6. PHNOM PENH REASSESSSES THE PEACE OPTION? NEVERTHELESS, IN PRIVATE, THE NEW GOVERNMENT SEEMS TO BE REASSESSING ITS POSITION, AND PERHAPS COMING TO THE CONCLUSION, HOWEVER DISTASTEFUL, THAT A NEGOTIATED SOLUTION IS

ESSENTIAL AND THAT THERE MAY BE NO ALTERNATIVE TO AN ATTEMPT TO INITIATE CONTACT WITH REPRESENTATIVES OF SIHANOUK. SIRIK MATAK COMMENTED IN LATE MARCH THAT THE PRINCE IS NOW MORE POPULAR IN CAMBODIA THAN LON NOL AND THAT HE SHOULD BE ALLOWED TO RETURN. HE ALSO SUGGESTED TO THE INSURGENTS THAT IT IS WILLING AND READY TO NEGOTIATE EQUALLY AND OPENLY ON ALL ISSUES. PRESUMABLY, "EVERYTHING POSSIBLE" WOULD INCLUDE CONTACT WITH A REPRESENTATIVE OF SIHANOUK.

7. IN TAM, TOO, HAS INDICATED IN RECENT MONTHS THAT HE CONSIDERS THE OPENING OF NEGOTIATIONS ESSENTIAL. AT VARIOUS TIMES HE HAS BEEN IN CONTACT WITH INSURGENT REPRESENTATIVES, MOSTLY DISTRICT-LEVEL LEADERS. FOLLOWING THE JANUARY CEASEFIRE IN VIETNAM, HE PROPOSED THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A COMBINED GKR-INSURGENT COMMISSION TO NEGOTIATE AN END TO THE CAMBODIAN CIVIL WAR AND TO FORM A COALITION GOVERNMENT.

8. LON NOL, A PRIME OBSTACLE TO CONTACTS WITH SIHANOUK OR HIS REPRESENTATIVE, NOW HAS A LESS DOMINANT ROLE AS ONE OF FOUR PRESUMABLY EQUAL COUNCIL MEMBERS. SHOULD HE DECIDE TO TAKE HIS LONG PLANNED TRIP ABROAD FOR MEDICAL TREATMENT, HIS ABSENCE FROM THE POLITICAL SCENE COULD PERMIT FURTHER EXPLORATION OF NEGOTIATING POSSIBILITIES. THESE MAY ALREADY BE UNDERWAY. THE "NEUTRAL" EXPATRIATE SON SANN, WHO A YEAR AGO SOUGHT UNSUCCESSFULLY TO MEET WITH GRUNK PRIME MINISTER PENN NOUTH, WAS RECENTLY INVITED TO COME TO PHNOM PENH. IT APPEARS FROM THE COMMENTS HE HAS MADE IN WIDE-RANGING CONTACTS IN THE CAPITAL THAT GKR OFFICIALS ARE DISCUSSING WITH HIM

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WAYS TO MAKE EFFECTIVE CONTACT WITH THE OTHER SIDE. RUSH

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HONG KONG
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